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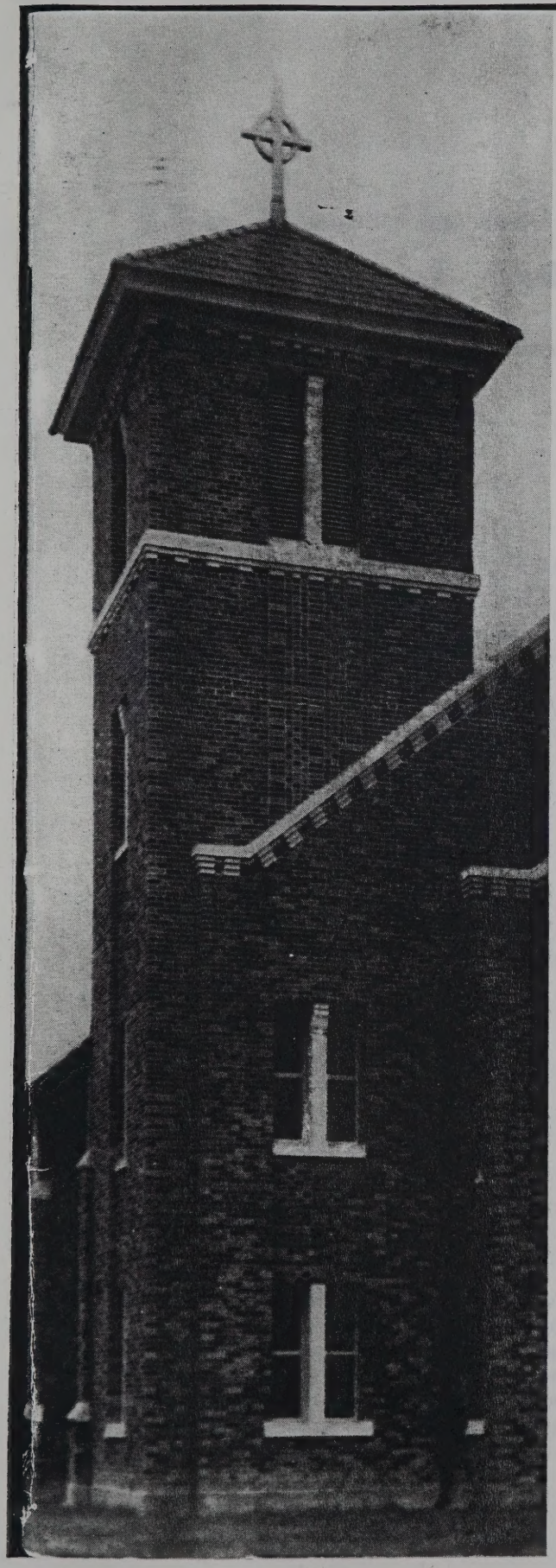

St. Theresa's Church

Gonzales, La.

Dedication

October 25, 1953

The Church of St. Theresa of Avila

Gonzales, Louisiana

1918 — 1953

Labors of the Lazarists—"La Riviere Neuve"—Sacred Heart of Jesus Church of Cornerview—Pastors of New River—"La Prairie," St. Joseph's Chapel of St. Amant, The Chapel at Lake—Parish Center Transferred to Gonzales—The New Parish Church.

By
ROGER BAUDIER, SR., K.S.G.,
Official Chronicler of the
Archdiocese of New Orleans

Compiled in this year, 1953, at the time of the solemn dedication of the new St. Theresa of Avila Church at Gonzales, La., at the direction of its pastor and builder, Rev. Edmund Gaulrapp, in tribute to the pioneer Catholics of East Ascension Parish, to their devoted pastors and to the people of St. Theresa's of today, who by their faith, loyalty and generosity made possible our new church to the greater glory of God.

Dedication

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
THE MOST REVEREND
JOSEPH FRANCIS RUMMEL, S.T.D.,
Archbishop of New Orleans

The Reverend Pastor and loyal parishioners of the Church of St. Theresa of Avila of Gonzales, La., see in the erection and formal dedication of their new church, another milestone in the sustained progress of the Archdiocese during His Excellency's administration. Grateful to His Excellency for his guidance, inspiration and leadership in the task of erecting their new parish church, as a tribute of filial devotion and well-wishing, they dedicate this booklet which records the history of their parish to His Excellency during this year of his silver jubilee as a Bishop.

Ad Multos Annos!

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PROGRAM

DEDICATION CEREMONIES
ST. THERESA OF AVILA CHURCH

Gonzales, Louisiana

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

Sunday, October 25, 1953

BLESSING OF THE NEW CHURCH

His Excellency, The Most Reverend Joseph Francis Rummel, S.T.D.,
Archbishop of New Orleans

Chaplains to the Most Reverend Archbishop
Very Rev. Thomas U. Bolduc, S.M.,
Rector of Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans
and
Rev. Theodore Ray, S.J.
Loyola University, New Orleans

Master of Ceremonies to the Most Reverend Archbishop
Rev. Joseph Vath,
Vice-Chancellor

SOLEMN HIGH MASS

Celebrant
Rev. Edmund Gaulrapp, Pastor of St. Theresa's Church

Deacon
Rev. Joseph P. Janssen, Pastor of St. Cecilia's Church,
New Orleans

Subdeacon
Rev. Malcolm Strassel, Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church,
Destrehan, La.

Master of Ceremonies for the Mass
Rev. John A. Tomasovich,
Assistant Pastor, Our Lady of Prompt Church,
Westwego, La.

Sermon
Rt. Rev. Msgr. Leonard Robin,
Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church,
Plaquemine, La.

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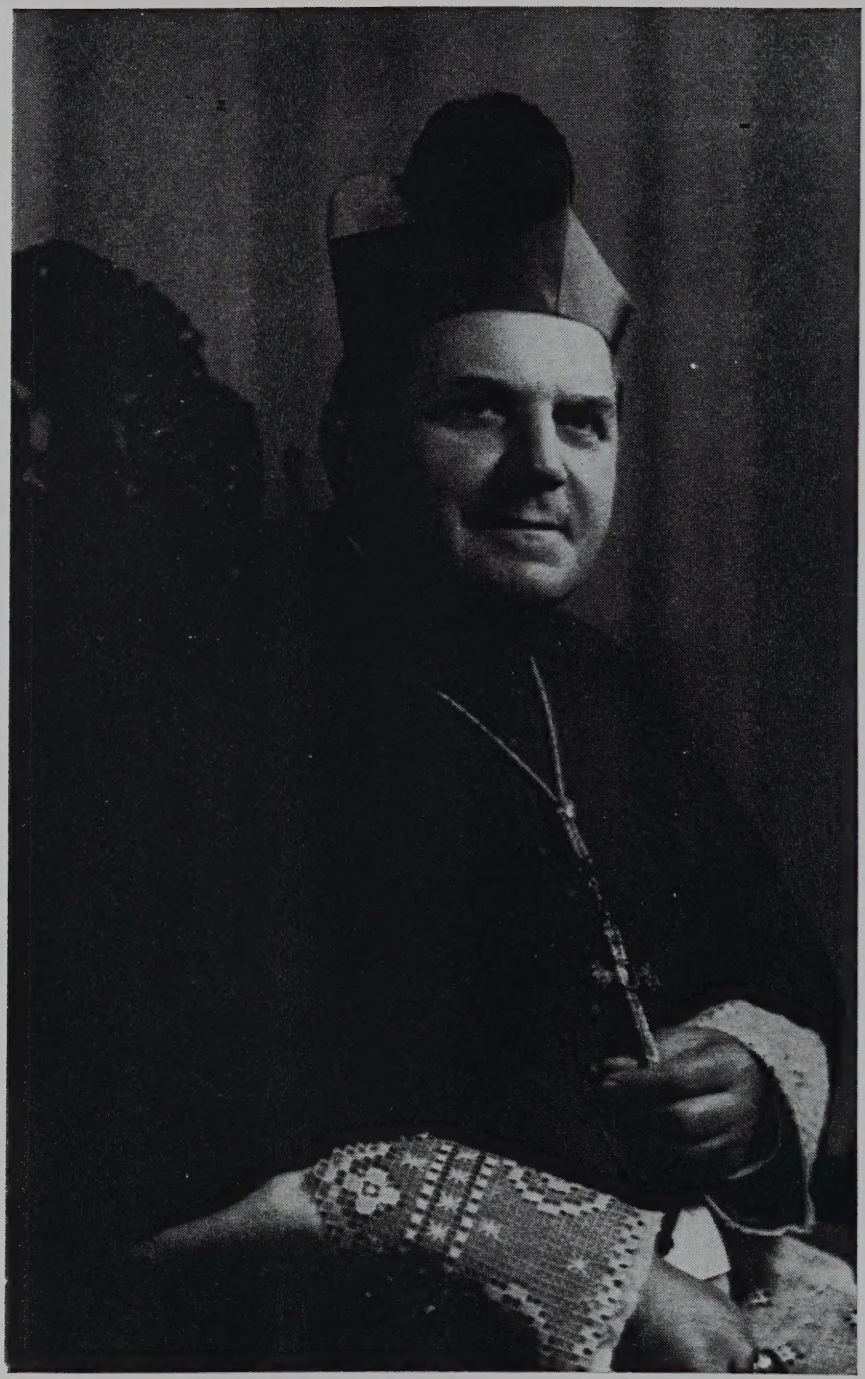
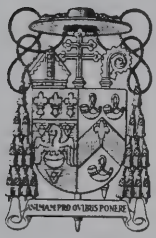


HIS EXCELLENCY
JOSEPH FRANCIS RUMMEL, S.T.D.
Archbishop of New Orleans

ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE

2809 SOUTH CARROLLTON AVENUE

NEW ORLEANS, LA.



Greeting

To Reverend Edmund Gaulrapp, Pastor, and to the devoted parishioners of the Church of St. Theresa of Gonzales, Louisiana, we are pleased herewith to extend cordial congratulations upon the completion of their new church, which is to be ready for dedication in the near future.

Recently we had occasion to visit informally the new edifice and we are very happy to record the delight which we derived from our experience. An impressive exterior serves as a fitting enclosure for an inspiring interior, which even in its unfinished condition gave evidence of an elevating atmosphere combined with ample space and comfort that will make this House of Prayer and divine worship a center of spiritual joy.

The present volume is intended to give the members and friends of the congregation of St. Theresa an historical background of the parish as well as a graphic description of the architecture and liturgical features that have been incorporated into the new church. We are confident that this souvenir of the dedication will be treasured by many as a precious family possession which the children and the children's children of the parents, who have been instrumental in making possible this worthy structure, will read with pride and edification.

May we conclude with an expression of genuine gratitude to Reverend Father Gaulrapp, his parishioners and his friends, who have cooperated in accomplishing this notable addition to the series of churches, which give evidence of our Catholic faith in every corner of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. It is particularly gratifying to note the vision and the spirit of sacrifice which have made the new Church of St. Theresa in Gonzales a true symbol of the high ideals which Holy Mother Church presents to us for our emulation when there is question of erecting a sanctuary for the All High God. We are confident that the present and future generations of Catholic people that will make their temporal homes in Gonzales will find peace, joy and sanctification in their spiritual home, the Church of St. Theresa. Upon all we implore a heavenly blessing through the intercession of Theresa, the Saint of Avila.

✠JOSEPH FRANCIS RUMMEL
Archbishop of New Orleans

Feast of St. Louis—August 25, 1953

REV. EDMUND GAULRAPP

INSTALLED AS PASTOR OF ST. THERESA'S CHURCH,
GONZALES, LA., FEBRUARY 15, 1939.
BUILDER OF THE NEW PARISH CHURCH, 1952-1953.

Pastor's Message

My dear Parishioners:

The glorious day when we solemnly dedicate our new parish church marks the final goal of our hopes and dreams. To build and consecrate a temple to our Lord is a sublime and holy task. In silent joy we have witnessed the ancient rite of blessing and dedication, completing and crowning our efforts.

Looking back over the years, we realize that this beautiful structure was once a pious wish of our hearts—a blue print in our minds. We wanted to rear a temple that would be a fitting dwelling place for our Divine Saviour. The plan of every Catholic Church centers around the Divine Presence, for Jesus is enshrined in the tabernacle so that He may be with us at all times.

When we build a church, we build for our Divine Saviour; we return His love and earn His blessings. Yes, dear friends, this church is a home for the Hidden Lord and we have tried earnestly and devotedly to make it a beautiful and suitable one. With loving patience and careful planning we have accomplished our best. We have earned the satisfaction of work well done.

You know that our parish church was not erected without sacrifices and I may say, great sacrifices for some. But it was a labor of love and love accomplishes the impossible. I wish to express my gratitude and sentiments of personal appreciation for the donations and the service that went into the building of our church. Time and money were needed and you gave both generously and willingly. God will reward and bless you for all you have done. As your pastor I am gratified because this church is the visible sign of your faith, your zeal for religion.

This church is not only a home for our Divine Lord, it is also a home for us. Here the life-giving Sacraments are dispensed. Our children are baptized. Our young people married. We receive our Divine Savior in Holy Communion, we are blessed in Benediction by Him Who walked through the hills and valleys of Palestine. Here daily we behold the sacrifice of the Mass and here too our loved ones who have fallen asleep are carried before the altar for their requiems.

How we shall grow to love this altar, these walls, for here we have our Divine Saviour in our midst. ready to soothe our wearied and troubled souls. And should we stray from Him, how eager He is to absolve us in the confessional.

Our parish church is the gateway to heaven. Here we are united with God, heaven reaches down to earth and the two are mingled in faith and hope and charity. It is our nearest approach on this earth to the everlasting kingdom. May the joy in our hearts on this glorious day, remain with you and brighten your days. May it become a hallowed memory, always comforting, always sustaining. You have done a great work. God bless you one and all.

Devotedly yours,
(Rev.) Edmund Gaulrapp, Pastor

Photo of new church above, and on front cover, courtesy: Diboll-Kessels & Associates

THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. THERESA OF AVILA

Gonzales, Louisiana

Old church moved from the site, May 16, 1952

Ground-breaking ceremonies, June 8, 1952

Building operations began, June 9, 1952

Driving of concrete piling, June 18, 1952

Blessing and laying of cornerstone, Feast of Christ the King, Sunday, October 26, 1952

Dedication of the new church by His Excellency, the Most Reverend Archbishop, Feast of Christ the King, Sunday, October 25, 1953

The Church of St. Theresa of Avila

At Gonzales, Louisiana

+

The House of God and the Gate of Heaven

MORE THAN three-quarters of a century ago, an impressive new Sacred Heart of Jesus Church was erected on "la Riviere Neuve," back of the old plantations that lined the Mississippi River. The old records state that this beautiful edifice was the pride of the New River section, in fact of all Ascension Parish east of the river.

Thirty-five years ago, Gaudens Pousson erected another imposing parish church for the Cornerview section, this time at Gonzales, and it was dedicated under the patronage of St. Theresa of Avila.

Came 1952, and pastor and parishioners united for the erection of an even more imposing parish church at Gonzales—an artistically conceived house of worship that has justifiably aroused the pride of whole east bank of Ascension.

Throughout the Church down the centuries, clerics and laymen and lay women have been inspired like Solomon of old to glorify Almighty God with magnificent temples to which they dedicated their inspired art and their God-given artistry. Under the New Dispensation they sought to build as beautifully as they knew how the courts of the Lord, the place where the Eucharistic Lord dwells —"the house of God and the gate of heaven."

That love for the beauty of the house of the Lord lives on in the Church and in our own times we still see that characteristic quality impelling clergy and faithful to give of their time, effort, art, means and talents of artisans to rear courts of the Lord, where His veiled glory dwells, and where they may assemble to render their homage to Him. That same spirit of love for God and love for the beauty of His house has been manifested in the Parish of St. Theresa of Avila at Gonzales, where a magnificent and impressive new church has reared its spacious nave and cross-crowned tower against the skies of east Ascension Parish, the fourth house of worship built by New River Catholics.

Art is said to reflect the life and the history of a people. This is true of the new St. Theresa's Church, for the architects have designed the edifice to reflect the history of the section which it serves. It is of modified French provincial or Normandy type, in keeping with the homeland origin of the pioneers who brought the Faith to the east Ascension section. Combined with this is the Spanish influence in the building in keeping also with the Castillian origin of many families who settled there and whose descendants are parishioners. This combination of French and Spanish styles, well known in South Louisiana, has been necessarily modified, because of consideration given to new building materials now

available, but unknown during the two colonial eras that left their indelible stamp on the state and its people and their lives.

The exterior of the church is in colored face brick, with cast-stone trimmings. The building, constructed of brick, concrete and steel, occupying the site of the original 1918 parish church, is 60 feet wide by 130 feet in depth, and has a total seating capacity of about 690, besides the spacious choir loft.

The capable architects were Diboll-Kessels and Associates of New Orleans, and the designing and supervision, including furnishings and fixtures, were under the personal direction of Jack J. H. Kessels, K.S.G., a partner in the firm, who has gained wide recognition for the designing of many impressive churches and buildings in Louisiana. The general contractors were Caldwell and McCann of Baton Rouge. The basic contract was for $161,654.13, while interior furnishings were for an additional amount.

The new church foundation includes 87 bell-bottom concrete piles. The interior walls are finished in a press brick of cream color, "Acme Perla," furnished by Fred J. Grace of Baton Rouge. The roof of asbestos blue-black shingle is applied in American colonial method on 45-pound felt.

Features of the church facade are a central high-arched entrance with a rose window beneath the curve of the arch, and a tower with belfry, topped by a cast aluminum cross. Besides the main entrance, with its heavy doors that bear large crosses, there are two side entrances in the rear of the church near the side altars. Lightning protection is provided on the steeple cross and on the high point of the church.

The exterior press brick, a product of Schneider Brick and Tile Co., Inc., Slidell, La., is known as a "carpet type" mixture.

Directly inside the main entrance is a large narthex, with a baptistery to the right, and an ushers' room and stairway to the choir gallery to the left. On each side of the large doorway giving access from the narthex to the nave, are holy water fonts, and above each is a large bulletin board for parish announcements. Around the bowl of one font are the words: "Sanctify My Soul," and of the other: "Purify My Heart."

A simple iron grill separates the baptistery from the narthex. Simple dignity characterizes the Baptism chapel. In its center stands the baptismal font, consisting of a single solid block of gold and black marble, bearing the inscription: "Child of God," recalling one of the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism. A striking adjunct of the chapel is the window with its two panels picturing the main parts of the "Credo." A small cartouche in the lower right corner of one panel adds a medieval practice, small figures representing the pastor as donor of the window, instead of using the customary inscription in lettering. A door on the side gives access to the baptistery from the outside, for the person brought to be baptized,

This gives a general view of the interior of the new church as seen from the choir gallery. Center of attention is the impressively simple liturgical main altar with a large crucifix against the panel reredos. The altar, seven steps higher than the nave floor, is visible from every point in the spacious church.

but after the ceremony the child is brought out of the chapel into the Church, symbolic of its reception into the Church. On the door of the grill are two fish in a circle, an early Christian symbol of Baptism. The marble font is from the Daprato Studios of Chicago.

Heavy doors of natural finish wood give ingress to the spacious nave. There are supports for the high ceiling with its open trusses and beams, so that a full view of the impressive main altar is to be had from every part of the church, without pillars to obstruct the view.

At left and right are confessionals, directly below the choir gallery. On the central natural finish wood of the central door where the priest sits, are crossed keys, recalling the power of the keys, given by Christ. An ingenious system of lights tells those waiting for confession if the priest is "in the box" and if someone is occupying the sections for penitents. When the penitent kneels, a light flashes on outside, above the door. The latter sections are enclosed by solid doors. An air-conditioned vent at the top of the priest's section of the confessional makes for greater comfort. The grating consists of strips at an angle so that the penitent's face or the priest's face cannot be seen.

The visitor is struck by the pleasing soothing effect of the color scheme of the interior, the cream color of press brick walls and the tan pastel shade of the 5900 pieces of Celotex tiles that make up the nave ceiling, together with the light green and cream colored glass of the lighting fixtures. All of this is heightened by the subdued indirect lighting from wall lights and the hanging fixtures. Against the cream and tan colors, the massive ceiling trusses are silhouetted effectively and give the impression not only of massiveness, but also of great solidity.

The sanctuary is framed off by two pilasters, and a heavy transverse strip of the same design as the pilasters, a striking departure from the customary sanctuary arch. The fleur-de-lis around the "Chi-Ro" design at the middle of the transverse is reminiscent of the French who brought the Faith here.

The five sides of the apse to the top of the two sacristy doors are marble wainscoting of pink Appalachian marble. The sanctuary floor is of plastic tile.

Two stained glass windows pierce the side walls of the sanctuary, above the wainscoting. The window on the Epistle side carries figures of angels with trumpets, fulfilling the ministry of praise. The Gospel side window has angelic figures swinging censers, indicating the prayer of petition.

Beneath each of these sanctuary windows is a coat-of-arms. The one on the Gospel side is that of the reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, while that on the Epistle side is the heraldry of the present Ordinary, His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel.

Stained glass windows have not yet been installed in the nave of the church. These high windows are arranged to permit opening of banks of window sections and give maximum air circulation in

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the body of the church. It is planned, as a future project for the parish, for the windows in the nave to cover the complete history of Revelation beginning with the days of Creation, and ending with notable saints in the history of the Church. Each of the windows would have four decorative panels, and the suggested subjects follow: Window No. 1, Creation; No. 2, fall of Adam and his expulsion; No. 3, great figures of the Old Dispensation; No. 4, the Incarnation; No. 5, the public life of Our Lord; No. 6, the Passion; No. 7, Resurrection and Pentecost; and No. 8, Church history.

The completeness of the scheme of teaching presented by the windows, will not be realized until they are all in place. They have been designed to be subordinate to the general architectural harmony, and will silently teach the Faith to all who study the

Progress in the construction of the new church is recorded in the top picture. Framework of the main doorway rises above the wall level. Lower photo offers a contrast between the old and the new—the new church nearing completion, and (at left) the old church with its truncated tower.

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windows. The comprehensiveness of the subjects in this series of windows far exceeds that usually found in the average parish church, and the unusualness of the treatment will present the truths depicted with a fresh vividness.

To go back to the actual physical aspects of the new building, one notes the cornerstone which rests to the left of the pilaster on the Gospel side of the church. In a free translation, the Latin inscription says: "To the honor of the Great Eternal and Omnipotent God, under the title and protection of the great St. Theresa of Avila, Virgin, this cornerstone was blessed and laid in solemn rites on the 26th day of October in the year of Our Lord 1952, in the fourteenth year of the Pontificate of Pope Pius XII, in the 18th year of the Archiepiscopal Administration of Joseph Francis Rummel, in the 14th year of the Pastoral Administration of Edmund Gaulrapp. Praise be always to God and the Blessed Mother."

On each side of the sanctuary is a spacious sacristy, and the two are connected by an ambulatory behind the apse. On the Gospel side is the priest's sacristy, a large room with cedar-lined vestment cases, trays and cabinets, all in natural wood finish, and fireproof lockers, having metal-lined doors. In this sacristy is a door leading into an alcove which opens into the nave. The door is arranged to serve as a confessional while the priest is in the sacristy preparing for Mass. In this sacristy are the electric controls for the church bells by the I. T. Verdin Co., Cincinnati, and the battery of switches, arranged to permit illumination of the church by individual fixtures, in banks, or in full, as needs require. In the center of the ambulatory is an exit with covered porch, with pathway to the rectory.

The Epistle side sacristy is for the altar boys. It has also connection with the church heating system, which is controlled by thermostats. A large sink and a work table provide facilities for the altar society members to prepare flower vases and for the janitor when cleaning. Lockers are installed for the altar boys' cassocks and surplices.

The choir loft extends completely across the front interior of the church over the narthex, having ample depth for organ and choir, and even for worshippers on special occasions when there are crowds. To comply with state fire regulations, an additional door is provided at one side as an emergency exit.

The new church has been provided with a new pipe organ of compact construction, but of impressive appearance with its detached console of solid walnut. Stops are controlled by tilting-tablets. The console action is all electric to activate the 233 pipes. The organ is a Moller "Artiste" instrument, obtained through Rive and Rive of New Orleans.

From the choir gallery one obtains a close view and the details of the artistic circular window at the top of the church entrance.

This close up view of the main altar in the new church shows the impressive ensemble and designing, impressive by its simplicity. Beneath the canopy is the symbolic figure of the dove, and in the front center of it, the symbol of St. Theresa, patroness of the church. The massiveness of the altar table and its supports are readily seen. The crucifix stands out strikingly against the rich panel reredos.

As explained by Rambusch of New York, designer of the new church windows, it may be called the "Te Deum" for it presents the Holy Trinity in traditional form in the center. God the Father is identified by the triple crown; Our Lord by the wound in His hand, and the Holy Spirit in the traditional form of a dove. The Glorious Choir of the Apostles is represented by St. James, identified by a shell. St. Edmund of Canterbury stands for the Confessors, while the company of the Prophets is represented by Moses who is holding the Tablets of the Law. Four Angels, who recall the Heavenly Choir, appear in the four corners of the design. Another touch of medieval practice is introduced in this window: St. Edmund is the patron saint of the pastor who built the church, and St. James is the patron of the architect who designed it.

The dome of St. Peter's represents the Church and recalls the promise of Our Lord that He would be with His Church all days and the Holy Spirit would teach it all truth.

Such briefly, is the description of the new St. Theresa's Church in its physical aspects—a beautiful church structure in the great tradition of Church art with its manifold facets that teach and inspire and uplift the souls of the worshippers.

"The Beauty of Thy House"

FOR THE CATHOLIC, the parish church is far more than a meeting house or an assembly hall for worshippers. The Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist makes a Catholic church truly the "House of God," a place where His glory dwells, even if veiled by the Sacramental species. Because of this, the faithful in all ages of the Church lavished their wealth, their gifts, their treasures and their art on their churches, offering to God's glory of their best and their most precious. And that is why Catholic churches have always been, the world over, treasure houses of magnificence in art, reflecting the Faith of members of the Church, their piety and their love for God.

But in addition to this, Catholic churches with their art, statuary, symbolism, paintings, stained glass windows, frescoes and ornamentation inspire the worshippers, lift up their hearts and minds to God and teach them truths of the Faith. St. Theresa's Church of Gonzales is an excellent example of these traditional functions of a church, and of the love of a people to make beautiful the house of God. The words of the Psalmist well apply here: "I have loved O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

In every Catholic church, the main altar should be prominent, and all other altars or shrines should be relatively subordinate to it. This requirement of Church regulations is beautifully and cor-

Looking towards the rear of the new church, one notes the extensive gallery, the heavy central doors, the confessionals on each side, and the striking "Te Deum" window in the rear center of the choir gallery. All these features are explained in the text.

rectly carried out in the new St. Theresa's Church. The central altar stands seven steps above the floor of the nave—one from the nave floor to the passageway between the sanctuary railing and the sanctuary level; three steps from this passage to the floor, then three more steps to the predella.

The altar platform or predella and its steps are of verde antique marble. The altar itself is impressively simple. It consists of a large single slab that constitutes the mensa or altar table, of highly polished unblemished botticino marble. Supporting it are two stipes or columns at each end, carved from Giallo Reale marble, all four representing the four Evangelists. The mensa slab which weighs 3900 pounds, bears five carved crosses on its surface, recalling the five wounds of Christ, and a small hollow near the front edge, which contain relics of saints, as required by the law of the Church.

In the center rear stands the circular gold tabernacle, and on each side are three candlesticks, the only ornaments on the altar table.

The simple altar stands against a reredos or background setting, of a tall, many-sectioned panel of finely toned and grained oak. Against this reredos hangs a large cross in dull red, outlined in gold. At the very top of it are the customary initials of the crucifixion device in gold letters, I. N. and below them, R. I. The figure of Christ on the cross is a particularly fine piece of Italian carving. It is a reproduction of the well-known Limpias corpus, in which all of the detail is realistically rendered. The impressive thorn crown is of real thorn obtained from the Holy Land.

Liturgical regulations call also for a canopy over the main altar, and this has been complied with in very artistic fashion in St. Theresa's. This tester or canopy is of oak, richly decorated on the underside with stars, and a symbol of the Holy Spirit. On the front edge is a carved symbol of St. Theresa of Avila. Since regulations call for the dedication of the high altar to the patron saint, it is quite natural that the symbol of St. Theresa is incorporated in this canopy. It consists of a heart pierced by an arrow, indicative of love of God that pierced the saint's heart, and a pen at the opposite diagonal, recalling her mystical writings. Also in the tester are two special floodlights to illuminate the altar and provide reading light during Mass.

The rectangular frame of the sanctuary, the dark marble predella, the gleaming marble altar table, with its golden tabernacle, set against the darker reredos with its great reddish crucifix and realistic corpus, and the whole topped by the canopy, all combine to focus attention on the central altar from any point in the church, which is as it should be.

The two side altars are subdued in order not to detract from the main altar, but they are little gems of art. The Blessed Virgin's altar is of Westland Chippilino marble, and consists of a central pier and a simple mensa. Below the altar table are symbols of the sun and moon and the rainbow, all of which symbolize that as the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the Blessed Virgin

Mary derives her glory and importance from Christ. The rainbow between the two is also a symbol of the reflected glory of the sun. These symbols also have another significance—the moon representing the Old Testament and the sun, the New Testament, and at the birth of Christ from the Blessed Mother, the sun outshines the moon.

The statue of Our Lady of hand carved wood in beautiful style and harmonious and subdued colors, stands on a bracket in gold, bearing in its center, the mystical rose, symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The statue is that of Our Lady as the Immaculate Conception, which is recalled by the snake with the apple under her foot.

St. Joseph's altar is of black and gold marble, executed in the more traditional form of altar, with the front, usually called the "paleotto," and the sides supporting the mensa. Above it against the wall is an artistic statue of St. Joseph, bearing a carpenter's square in his hand. The bracket upon which it rests, is of gold and rubbed green, with a lily, symbolic of St. Joseph, on each of the three sides.

The altar railing is of cast stone having beautiful inlays along the sides of grapes, figure of the Eucharist, carved of botticino marble and made in Italy. On the central piers are two peacocks, symbolizing immortality, the glorious life after death, promised by Christ to those who receive His body and His blood. Instead of gates, as so often used, the central opening into the sanctuary is closed off by beautiful bronze ornaments which support a sash.

The impressive main altar, reredos, tester, side altars, art glass windows, imported marble carvings in the altar railing and the special lighting fixtures are all from Rambusch Decorating Co. of New York. The pews and the sedilia were executed by Riecke Cabinet Works of New Orleans. The altar rail and holy water fonts were made by the Architectural Stone Co., also of New Orleans. The marble altar platform and the sanctuary wainscoting are from Clifford A. King of the same city. Jans Hansen of New Orleans furnished the carved wood statutes of Our Lady and St. Joseph, also the Stations of the Cross. The unique Stations are a sharp departure from the usual models. Of hand-carved wood, they portray in each Station only two figures, Our Lord being always one of them, with a golden nimbus that makes Him stand out. Only the head and shoulders appear. They are tinted, the subdued colors harmonizing with the walls, and are enclosed in natural finish heavy wooden frames. The required wooden cross, detached from the Stations, is attached to the wall below the lower left corner of each plaque.

All of these furnishings and ornaments combine with the artistic lines and construction material of the interior to produce a harmonious whole, with not a single item or feature that clashes. This beautiful, inspiring ensemble bespeaks long, careful study and planning of pastor, architects, decorators and furnishers, all of whom were fired with that spirit of the Psalmist that actuated also the parishioners of St. Theresa's, love for the beauty of the house of the Lord. St. Theresa's is a vivid evidence that the Church is still the inspiration of the artist and the artisan.

ALMIGHTY CREATOR
JESUS CHRIST
LORD
THE DEAD, HE ASCENDED
INTO HEAVEN, SITTETH
AT THE RIGHT
HAND OF GOD
THE FATHER
ALMIGHTY, FROM HENCE
HE SHALL COME TO
JUDGE THE
AND THE
I BELIEVE
BY THE HOLY GHOST
MARY
IS THE HOLY GHOST,
THE HOLY CATHOLIC
CHURCH, THE
COMMUNION OF
SAINTS, THE
FORGIVENESS OF SINS
THE RESURRECTION
OF THE
AND LIFE

Plans, Funds and Reality

NOT LONG AFTER Father Gaulrapp assumed the pastorate of St. Theresa's Parish of Gonzales, he and the parishioners realized that a new church would soon be a necessity. The building had been erected some 22 years previously, and it was showing the effects of time already. Besides, both pastor and congregation felt they should have more adequate church facilities, and a church in keeping with its sacred purposes, likewise with the growing community.

Jack J. H. Kessels, New Orleans architect, was called in for an examination of the structure, and this revealed that the tower was top heavy, threatening to fall. This demanded removal, and Father Gaulrapp undertook to have this necessary work done. Now more than ever pastor and people were desirous of replacing the building with a more suitable one. Painting and repairs were needed, but it was deemed inadvisable to expend any substantial funds for such purposes, if the church was eventually to be demolished.

There was still a debt of $3000 on the parish when Father Gaulrapp took over, so before any steps could be taken to procure funds for a new church, it was necessary to liquidate this indebtedness. By dint of several drives and strict economy in disbursements, Father Gaulrapp was able to clear the last $1500 outstanding by the end of 1941.

That same year, he was happy to announce to the parish that $421.37 had been set aside as the beginning of the building fund for a new church. Careful and prudent use of funds enabled the pastor in 1942 to transfer $2208.30 to that special fund. This continued careful handling of funds and the interest and co-operation of the parishioners brought the reserve fund to $20,700 already by 1944, but World War II was on, with all of its problems and restrictions and rationing, so that the plan of building a new church had to be shelved for the time being. The year 1947 saw the building fund reach a total of $45,700.

In 1948, Father Gaulrapp got the movement for the new church underway. A parish building committee was organized among the parishioners, and it was agreed to call in Mr. Kessels to draft the plans for the proposed new parish church. Preliminary sketches were made, the committee members reviewed them and made suggestions and the project moved forward steadily. The first drafts of plans for the new building were submitted to His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel. He not only gave approval, but also made suggestions for a campaign among people of the parish

The stained glass window in the baptistery is one of the unusual features of the new church. It presents a word and picture rendition of the Apostles' Creed, which is used for the ceremony of Baptism. A cartouche at the lower right pictorially shows the donor of the window.

for funds, so that the major portion of the cost of construction would be met at once, and any debt for future payment would be held to a minimum.

In mid-September, 1948, Father Gaulrapp and the building committee called a meeting of all parishioners of St. Theresa's to hear reports on what had been done and about the projected plans for the new church. The response was a large attendance and an enthusiastic meeting. Father Gaulrapp made formal announcement of the decision to erect a new St. Theresa's Church. Mr. Kessels explained preliminary plans, and members of the building committee added their comments. Then the letter from the Most Reverend Archbishop was read. The whole project being placed before the parishioners, they gave the pastor an overwhelming vote of confidence.

Prior to this, funds had been raised by means of the traditional parish festival, which had been introduced far back during the administration of Rev. P. Mesnil, and through other benefit affairs. For a time, Father Gaulrapp sought to discontinue parish fairs, because of the vast amount of burdensome work imposed on parishioners of goodwill and because of the uncertainty of success on account of weather conditions and other factors. Besides, many parishioners rather favored an outright donation to the church fund instead of all the trouble and work required for a parish fair. Prior to 1948 there had been an annual campaign for the building fund in November.

In accordance with the suggestions of His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, the drive for funds was conducted and it followed the plans that had been successfully used for the Youth Program campaign just around that time. The parish was divided into districts and a house-to-house canvass made for cash subscriptions or pledges that involved payment over a period of 20 months. The campaign necessitated a complete census, then the formation of groups of workers. Excellent and enthusiastic response was given by the parishioners. By the beginning of 1952, the parish building fund amounted to $105,000.

No parish project ever runs along smoothly or as planned—delays and unforeseen obstacles invariably arise. So it was with the plans for the erection of the new St. Theresa's Church of Gonzales. The Korean War broke out and with it came renewal of restrictions on building material and a shortage of essential materials, plus all of the regulations, forms, permits, allocations and other governmental requirements such as had prevailed during World War II and had been lifted only a few years previously. Plans for the new church were completed, but there matters had to rest for some time until material could be obtained and permits granted. Finally, at the latter part of 1951, it seemed that the way was clear to proceed. Application was made with the National Production Authority, and a press dispatch in the Times-Picayune, from Washington, listed St. Theresa's Church of Gonzales among the 18 projects in Louisiana approved by the NPA. On March 3, 1952, priority certificates covering steel, copper and other critical ma-

terial were received. The following day, soil borings were made to ascertain the type of foundation to be used for the new church.

The date, April 30, 1952, was set for the reception of bids for construction, and after their examination, the contract was awarded on May 10, to Caldwell and McCann of Baton Rouge. On May 1, His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, had authorized Father Gaulrapp to proceed with signing of necessary contracts, and to make a loan necessary for the completion of payments for the new structure.

F. X. McCann signed the contract on May 15, 1952, for his firm, and Mr. Kessels, the architect, for the firm of Diboll-Kessels and Associates, while Father Gaulrapp affixed his signature for the Gonzales congregation. The signing took place in the architect's offices.

Decision had been reached to use the same site as the old church, hence it was necessary to remove it, but it was felt that the most practical plan was to roll the old building to one side and use it until the new church was completed, thus obviating the expense of erecting a temporary place for Church services. The building was examined by Leonce Millet of Gonzales, who concluded that the building could be safely moved. He was awarded the contract for this task on May 10, 1952, and six days later (May 16), the old church was moved approximately 70 feet north. The rolling operations began at 8 a.m., and by noon of the same day, the old building was at its specified place, without any mishap.

There had been so much delay and everyone was so eager to see the decade old dream of a new parish church come true, that arrangements moved right on. Father Gaulrapp set Sunday, June 8, 1952, for ground-breaking ceremonies. This took place right after the High Mass, with the pastor officiating. Present were Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. M. Eyraud, Dean of the Reserve Deanery, and Rev. John A. Tomasovich. In a brief talk to the large assembly of people who watched the historic ceremony, and the first physical step in the erection of their new house of worship, Father Gaulrapp told the parishioners that they were all builders by their contributions to make possible "the creation of this new tabernacle for Christ. You did not use hammer, nor saw, nor nails, wood, brick and stone, but you used the tools and materials that you possess, your co-operation, your money, your faith and your loyalty to build for Him and His Holy Name."

Building operations began on the very next day, and on June 18, 1952, the work began of driving the concrete piling for the foundation. Work was so far advanced in October, that arrangements were made for the cornerstone laying and blessing. The impressive ceremonies took place on Sunday, October 26, 1952, feast of Christ the King. Most Rev. L. Abel Caillouet, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, officiated.

The important event began with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the old church, consecration of the parish to Christ the King, and Sacramental Benediction. The sermon for the occasion was preached by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Herman P. Lohman, V.F., pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Baton Rouge, and dean of the Baton

Most Rev. L. Abel Caillouet, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, officiates at the impressive ceremonies of blessing and laying the cornerstone at the new St. Theresa's Church.

Rouge Deanery. His Excellency, Bishop Caillouet, extended greetings from the Most Reverend Archbishop to the pastor and the congregation, and paid tribute to the zeal and generosity that had characterized the work of the parishioners of St. Theresa's in connection with the erection of their new church. His Excellency spoke after the blessing of the cornerstone.

Following the services at the old church, at 4 p.m., a procession of acolytes, clergy and a throng of parishioners escorted the Bishop to the new building. He was assisted by Rev. Joseph Janssen, pastor of St. Cecilia's Church, New Orleans, and Rev. Paul

Landsmann, pastor of St. Anne's Church, Napoleonville, La. His Excellency blessed the wooden cross on the site of the main altar, then proceeded to the Gospel side corner of the sanctuary, where he blessed the marble stone, making three crosses with a silver trowel on each of the six sides of the stone. The trowel was the same used by the late His Eminence John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York, when the latter officiated for the cornerstone laying at St. George's Church, New York City, in 1912.

The Litany of the Saints was chanted by Monsignor Lohmann and Reverend Edward L. Boudreaux, and the responses by the clergy and St. Theresa's choir. In the copper box, which was fitted into the inside of the stone, were placed several religious medals; a medal of Christ the King; a medal of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of the United States; a medal of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, patroness of Louisiana; another of St. Joseph, patron of the Universal Church, and a solid gold medal of St. Theresa of of Avila, patroness of the parish. Other articles included a copy of Catholic Action of the South, and of the "Gonzales Weekly," a statistical report of the Bank of Gonzales, the Gonzales High School and the Gonzales Postoffice, together with a U. S. Rural Route map of the territory served by the local postoffice; documents pertaining to the history of the parish and the blessing and laying of the cornerstone, a medal of Our Lady of Fatima, and the new 1952 U. S. coins from one cent to one dollar.

(A translation of the Latin inscription on the cornerstone is to be found elsewhere in this booklet in the description of the interior of the church.)

After the blessing and laying of the stone, His Excellency blessed the walls of the new building. Rev. John A. Tomasovich, assistant at St. Joseph's Church at Grosse Tete, La., was master of ceremonies. Other members of the clergy present, besides those already mentioned, were Rev. William Folse, S.M., Convent, La.; Rev. Vincent Kleinpeter, pastor of St. Gabriel, La., and Rev. Paul Richard, assistant at Destrehan, La.

A new bell had been purchased for the new church. On the feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, 1952, it was solemnly blessed by Monsignor Eyraud, Dean of the Reserve Deanery, as delegated by the Most Reverend Archbishop. The sermon for the occasion was preached by Father Gaulrapp.

In accord with the suggestions of His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, in his letter of authorization and approval of May 1, 1952, in regard to the collection of additional funds to pay off promptly the additional debt for the new church, Father Gaulrapp and the Building Fund Committee undertook a "Pay-as-We-Build Campaign" on July 14, 1952, with a general meeting of the parishioners, in the Gonzales School lunchroom. The group developed a system whereby all wage-earners might perform their duty to their parish over a period of 13 months. As always there was a generous response from the parishioners.

Work on the new building went on steadily, and gradually parishioners saw the dream of many years in the New River section

become a beautiful reality. In brick and mortar and stone and steel, they saw plans turning into a magnificent reality. They could see their generosity, their sacrifices and their love for God and the beauty of His house take shape and become something real, something tangible, something inspiringly beautiful—the result of the inspiration and careful study and planning of their pastor, coupled with their own loyalty, co-operation and efforts, translated by the hands of architects, contractors and artisans.

Pioneer Days In New Area

THE CHURCH PARISH of St. Theresa at Gonzales goes back only to 1918, a period of only 35 years, but the territory was an ecclesiastical parish long before that with a different parochial center. This was Sacred Heart of Jesus Church at New River or Cornerview P.O., designated as the parish church for a new ecclesiastical subdivision in late 1863—90 years ago.

However, even prior to that historic event, that section had its chapel already some 15 years, and still another, St. Ann's Chapel at Crevasse near Belle Helene, antedated the New River chapel.

The section of the civil Parish of the Ascension, lying on the east bank of the Mississippi River, was settled by French colonists in the days of the grandiose "concessions," and later under the Company of the Indies. When the Acadian refugees began to find shelter in the Louisiana colony after 1756, and during the Spanish regime after 1769, many of them came to that fertile area. Spanish colonists also took up lands there while Louisiana was a province of the Spanish crown.

All of these people were Catholics and they not only brought the Faith with them, but maintained it, despite no little neglect for decades. For a long time settlers depended upon the Capuchin missionaries from St. Charles Borromeo Church, the Little Red Chuch at Les Allemands, Destrehan of today, then the priests from St. James across the river, or the Capuchins who came down from St. Francis Church of Pointe Coupee.

However, when the Church of the Ascension was established by the Spanish Capuchin Friar, Father Angelus de Revillagodos, at La Fourche des Chetimachas, the site of the Indian village at the fork of the Mississippi and the bayou which took the name of Lafourche, it became the center of religious activities for east and west Ascension. Father Angelus served Ascension Church and its far flung territory for nearly two decades.

The influx of more Acadian refugees during the Spanish regime brought more settlers for that section, as the Spanish governor directed that these newcomers be settled along the river. Some of their descendants who went further North in Iberville

Historic Sacred Heart of Jesus Church of New River or Cornerview P. O., is shown as it stands today, after former enlargement and renovation. On this site stood the first parish church, Our Lady of the Nativity, built before the middle of the last century.

Parish, came down into the New River section, as did many from the Donaldsonville section, and some from St. James. Family names from all these sections are found among pioneers and their descendants of all these areas, such as the Landrys, Gautreauxs, Babins, Brauds, Leblancs, Bourques and others.

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, there began the American invasion and the records begin to show Anglo-Saxon names, besides the predominant French, Acadian and Spanish names.

For a long time, the settlers of east-bank Ascension Parish travelled by horse and wagon or by ox-cart or on horseback to the Mississippi and crossed over to Donaldsonville, or they went up the river road to St. Gabriel's Church of the Post of Iberville.

A small stream that started near present-day Geismar, flowing eastward past present-day Gonzales, St. Amant and Acy, early provided a practical means of communication with the interior, for the settlers of that section. This was far back known as "La Riviere Neuve" or New River, a name by which it is still known. Many of the early farms of that area were established along New River. Flourishing farms and larger plantations were operating along the river front.

The vast majority of the people were Catholics, and they were desirous of having a church in the vicinity of their homes. Probably the first Catholic chapel of the area was St. Ann's at Crevasse, near Belle Helene, which was popularly referred to by the Acadian descendants as "Sainte Anne de la Crevasse." Its original site is now in the Mississippi River. It was erected early in the 1840 decade.

The apostles of east-bank Ascension Parish were the zealous, tireless Lazarist Fathers, who took charge of Ascension Church of Donaldsonville in March, 1838. However, as early as 1827-1833, they had served the parish temporarily, when the Bishop was unable to fill the vacancy there. At the same time, the Fathers of Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists) were also given the care of Assumption Church and its vast territory—all the way west to the Atchafalaya—and the St. Vincent de Paul Diocesan Seminary at Plattenville. Thus the Vincentians had a mission field at the time that extended from the Amite River all the way across the diocese to the Atchafalaya River, including the entire civil Parishes of Assumption and Ascension.

This was not ecclesiastical territory in name only—the Lazarists conscientiously covered that territory from end to end. The first of their missionaries to serve on the east bank was Rev. Thadee Amat, C.M., 1838-1839. He visited all the New River section, and made his way eastward as far as French Settlement and Port Vincent. In August, 1839, he blessed St. Vincent's Chapel at Port Vincent. Later, Father Amat became the Bishop of Monterey and Los Angeles in California.

Under the zealous ministrations of the Vincentian Fathers, interest in Catholic affairs was widely aroused. The Crevasse chapel was built. Philip M. Mann, justice of the peace, donated land at

Prairieville for a Catholic cemetery and for a Protestant one. During the 1840 decade the movement of farmers into the "Riviere Neuve" section increased, but lack of roads was a great drawback. According to Sidney A. Marchand in his "Flight of a Century", settlers along the banks of New River in the 1830s to reach the Mississippi, had to go up the bayou known as New River to the property of Joseph Laurent Favre, then cut across his land. The first postoffice for these settlers along New River was established on the river front on March 8, 1836, under the name of New River Postoffice. Henry B. Larry was the first postmaster. The next decade saw work underway for the opening of a road through that section, which became known as New River Lane. These were the routes taken by Catholics of the area to reach St. Ann's Chapel at Crevasse or to reach the river to cross over to Donaldsonville to attend Ascension Church.

Mr. Marchand states that Leon Gautreau moved into the interior of the "Riviere Neuve" section and settled about nine miles east of the New River Postoffice in 1851, at Bayou Narcisse, near present-day Gonzales. Already established in that vicinity were Mrs. Zenon Gautreau, Cyprien Landry who operated a small store, Simeon Gautreau and Eugene Gautreau. Mail was brought from the river front to the store of H. V. "ToTo" Lamare, a short way up New River for distribution to settlers.

Apparently in the latter part of the 1840s, a small chapel was built at Cornerview, a building which Leon Gautreau records as ten feet square, next to a cemetery. The Lazarist Fathers visited this chapel which was dedicated to Our Lady's Nativity, remaining about one month before moving on to the next mission or station. The latter included La Prairie, White Houmas, St. Amant, Galvez, Lake Villard and Dutch Stores. The existence of the chapel in 1850, at the settlement which became known as "Riviere Neuve" and later as Cornerview Postoffice, was corroborated by Joseph Gonzales. This was the beginning of the church parish, originally the Nativity of "Riviere Neuve," now St. Theresa's of Gonzales. Lands in the area surrounding the pioneer New River chapel belonged to Seraphine Savoie, Gedeon Babin and Widow Amadeo Kling.

In those days, couples who desired to be married either had to wait until the visit of the Lazarists or make the tedious trip to Donaldsonville. Other Vincentian Fathers who served at Donaldsonville from 1838 until the time of the War Between the States included Father Boullier, Father Giustiniani, Father Chandy, Father Llebaria, Father Escoffier, Father Pascual, Father Masnou, Father Mignard, Father Alabau, Father Conway, Father Figary, Father Andrieu, Father Verrina, Father Acquaroni, Father Reilly and Father Calvo. They labored on both sides of the river in Ascension Parish.

The first postoffice at the site of present-day Gonzales was established in 1860; the locale was then known as White Houmas Postoffice. Vincent Paul Landry was the first postmaster. However, the office was closed in 1866. Roads were being improved, and drainage work was undertaken in the New River section.

Many farms were developing, many of them begun by descendants of the old families.

The year 1860 brought turmoil in the South, and bitter opposition to national policies on slavery, out of which arose the great dispute over the right of secession by individual states. Before long, word came into the backwoods of "la Riviere Neuve," up at "la Prairie," along Bayou Narcisse and all through the area that Louisiana had become a republic, then word of declaration of war. Over the river at Donaldsonville, there was enthusiastic recruiting for the Confederate Army to defend the rights of the Southern States, and soon packets were streaming down river, loaded with cheering soldiers from Pointe Coupee, Baton Rouge, Plaquemine. Men folks from New River began to cross over by twos and threes to enlist under the Stars and Bars.

Came 1862, and riders through the area, or visitors from Donaldsonville breathlessly told of the fall of New Orleans to Admiral Farragut. On August 9, 1862, the New River section echoed to the booming of cannons—Donaldsonville was being shelled by Yankee gunboats. There was much bitterness and many who had hesitated now grimly left to join the Confederates. Skirmishes and guerilla fighting now became the order of the day all through the area, with a full-fledged battle at Fort Butler in Donaldsonville, and others at Doyal's plantation. New River then became the scene of invading Federal forces, seeking to exterminate southern guerillas. The Emancipation Declaration was promulgated and farm labor became scarce. Money was lacking, resulting in want and widespread poverty, all bringing gloom and depression among the farm homes along "la Riviere Neuve" and Bayou Narcisse and Bayou Black. The mercantile stores had little left on their shelves and folks had to depend almost entirely on the land. Merchants who tried to get over to Donaldsonville or to board a packet for New Orleans in hopes of getting some merchandise, came back discouraged and bitter. On the river were only the ugly black Federal gunboats, some anchored before Donaldsonville, some bucking the river current upstream, others bearing large yellow flags steaming downstream with many wounded Federals.

In the midst of this disconsolate, gloomy condition in Southeast Louisiana, the first Church parish was established in east-bank Ascension.

The Parish of New River

IN 1861, Archbishop Jean Marie Odin, C.M., took charge of the See of New Orleans. A staunch supporter of the cause of the South, he quickly won the esteem and co-operation of the people of Louisiana. Fearlessly, he carried on his duties, striving to expand the work of the Church, but for this, he realized the pressing need for more priests. Thereupon, despite the war, he sailed for Europe to recruit missionaries for his vast archdiocese.

His tour of dioceses and seminaries in France brought him a number of volunteers—priests and seminarians. With him in France

The parish rectory, built by Father Castel, some fourteen years ago, stands in a bower of verdure, just a short distance away from the new church building.

at the time was Bishop Dubuis of Galveston, also seeking volunteer clerics for the great mission fields of the Lone Star State. However, the ports of the South were under Federal blockade. Archbishop Odin, impatient over having to wait in Europe with his priests and seminarians, devised means of getting them to New Orleans through the blockade. He chartered a French ship, "la Sainte Genevieve," to transport them together with Bishop Dubuis' recruits for Texas, to their destination. Permission was granted, and the unique ship—a veritable floating combination seminary, convent and ecclesiastical transport—loaded with some 60 priests, religious and seminarians landed at New Orleans on Good Friday, 1863, the first ship to go through the blockade and land at New Orleans. Aboard was New River's first pastor, and its first assistant.

The diocesan seminary had been established next to St. Stephen's Church in 1857, and thither the newcomers were taken. On November 4, 1863, ten of the seminarians who had already been ordained to the diaconate, received ordination to the priesthood at the hands of Archbishop Odin in St. Stephen's Church. Among them were Rev. Jean Baptiste LeSaicherre, native of Brittany, France, and Rev. Francis Xavier Ceuppens, a native of Belgium.

At that time (1863), coming up river from New Orleans, the last parish church with resident pastor was St. Michel de Cantrelle at Convent, La. Between it and St. Gabriel in Iberville Parish, there was no parish church. The Lazarist Fathers had represented to Monseigneur Odin the necessity for a parish church with resident pastor in that large stretch of territory which they had been serving since 1838. The Archbishop concurred in this view and decided to erect a parish in that territory, as soon as priests were available.

The recruits who came on the "Sainte Genevieve" gave him that opportunity. During his Confirmation tours, he had sized up the territory and its possibilities, so now decided to act. During November, 1863, in the midst of the War of Secession, he erected the Parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of New River. The parochial territory was to comprise all of Ascension Parish east of the Mississippi River, except the river front plantations.

Less than three weeks after his ordination, Father Jean Baptiste had his first appointment—pastor of the new parish! Within a few days with permits from the Federal military officials at New Orleans in his pocket, the 24-year-old young priest left for Donaldsonville, where the Lazarist pastor, Rev. A. Andrieu, C.M., turned the new territory over to him and explained the conditions that existed in the extensive wilderness, with its Catholics scattered from the Mississippi banks all the way to the Amite.

Monseigneur Odin was well aware of the vast area that the young pastor had to serve, also the lack of transportation means, other than the New River Lane and one or two roads to La Prairie (Prairieville of today) and Galvez and Manchac. He sent also to New River another young priest, just ordained at the same time as the pastor, Father Ceuppens, as his assistant. What the two young Levites lacked in experience they made up for with zeal, energy and great determination.

Father Le Saicherre performed the first Baptism in the newly erected parish, on November 30, 1863. The child was Marie Octavie Aimee Porche, and her sponsors were Valery Templet and Marie Aimee Breaud. The second Baptism, performed on December 6, 1863, was by Father Ceuppens; the child was Joseph Edmond Blouin.

The pioneer chapel was under the invocation of the Nativity of Our Lady, and it is so referred to in the act of the erection of the Stations of the Cross, in 1868. Apparently the pioneer little church continued to serve "la Riviere Neuve," probably enlarged. The present church was not built until after 1873, and it was then called the Church of the Sacred Heart.

Father Ceuppens continued as assistant to Father LeSaicherre until June of 1865, when he was called to New Orleans and became pastor of St. Mary of the Nativity in the Carrollton section. Father LeSaicherre was then left alone to serve the vast parish. But before the two priests separated, they prepared the first class for first Communion and Confirmation. On August 18, 1864, Archbishop Odin came to New River and administered Confirmation to a class of 160, and the next day he went to St. Ann's Chapel where he Confirmed 30.

The first marriage in the New River Church of the Nativity of Our Lady was that of Alexandre Hercule Landry and Alouisia Blouin, February 8, 1864, with Father LeSaicherre officiating. There were only four marriages in that year, and six in 1865. The first funeral was recorded on November 30, 1864—Marie Eve, aged about two years. Statistics for the first years of the parish show five Baptisms in November and December, 1863, 59 in 1864, 51 in 1865, and 55 in 1866.

Father LeSaicherre and Father Ceuppens evidently intended to build a larger church, and accordingly on October 22, 1864, bought two arpents, more or less, fronting on New River, by a depth of seven arpents, bounded by the lands of Seraphine Savoie, Gedeon Babin and Widow Amadeo Kling. The sale by Pierre Savoie, signed at the residence of Mrs. Estive Huguet, in the presence of J. B. Hebert and Simon P. Eliser, was for $700. Savoie's wife was Marie Adel Ory. This property in 1866, was deeded over to Archbishop Odin for the archdiocese.

The two young priests visited all of the vast territory under their care, on horseback, by buggy and by boat. A chapel had been built at La Prairie and placed under the invocation of Our Lady of Sorrows. Many of the residents along New River brought their dead to the cemetery there for interment. After Father Ceuppens was transferred, all of this work was left to Father LeSaicherre.

The latter continued to serve New River and its missions until the early part of 1868, when the Archbishop transferred him and he became the widely known and beloved pastor of St. Elizabeth's Church at Paincourtville. Monseigneur Odin had no one to replace him immediately, so as had been done so often before, he turned to the Lazarist Fathers at Donaldsonville, and requested them to resume their ministrations in east-bank Ascension. Father Andrieux, Vincentian pastor of Ascension Church, accepted the burden and he and Rev. Louis Philip Landry, C.M., in the latter part

of January, 1868, began to serve Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Church of New River and its missions. On April 17,1868, Father Landry, with authorization from Archbishop Odin, erected the Way of the Cross in the parish church in the presence of Father Andrieu, and several of the leading parishioners.

From the early parish registers we may glean some of the pioneer parishioners of the Church of the Nativity. Among these are found such family names as Blouin, Landry, Eliser, Savoie, Kling, Braud, Hebert, Babin, Gautreau, Guedry, Marchand, Argreve, Poche, Boudreau, Melancon, Louviere, Lanoue, Bercegeay, Mire, Morin, Sarazin, Michel, Long, Smith, Dorson, Villeneuve, Arsenaux, Boyden, Lanoux, Young, Bell, Laiche, Gonzales, Bourgeois, Duplessis and LeBlanc.

During 1868, Father Andrieu and Father Landry divided the work between them. Finally in February, 1869, Archbishop Odin sent Rev. V. A. Gavard as pastor of Nativity Church of New River.

Troubled Times and Many Pastors

THE NEXT DECADE in the New River parish was one of difficulties and misunderstandings, and an era that saw eight priests and temporary administrators trying to provide proper spiritual ministrations to the extensive parish. As happened in so many Louisiana parishes during the past century, groups of parishioners sought to run the parish and to dictate to the pastor in regard to what he should do and even some of the subjects that they did not want him to talk about.

Father Gavard, a French priest, arrived in February of 1869, but he left just before the third anniversary of his coming to the Church of the Nativity. His pastorate ended in January, 1872. During 1869, the parish recorded 43 Baptisms, but the following year (1870), Father Gavard baptized 72 persons. Besides the poverty that followed the War Between the States, the section like the rest of Louisiana was afflicted by political turmoil that accompanied Reconstruction. The parish in turn was afflicted by laicism, or efforts of the laity to lay down the law to the pastor.

Father Gavard was discouraged and left in January, 1872. Grieved over the attitude and actions of the parishioners, Archbishop Perche, who had succeeded Monseigneur Odin in 1870, left the parishioners without a pastor until the spring of 1873. Meanwhile, Father LeSaicherre, who always was interested in this first church that he served, returned to New River for a short time in August, 1872. Across the river, the Lazarists had given up Ascension Church and the Archbishop placed it in charge of the diocesan clergy, with Father Ceuppens, New River's first assistant, as the pastor. He likewise had great interest in "la Riviere Neuve," and off and on, during the sad vacancy, he crossed into east-Ascension to minister to the people.

Early in March, 1873, Archbishop Perche, back from a trip to Europe, decided to try again, and sent Rev. Celestin M. Frain, a French priest, who had labored in the North and had joined the Archdiocese of New Orleans, to assume charge of the Nativity

Church at New River. Father Frain was a very determined man, a priest of great energy, possessing a powerful voice and brooking no interference in the discharge of his priestly duties.

Aroused over conditions that he found in the parish, and resenting the attitude of the parishioners, he proceeded in his own blunt fashion to tell them just what he thought of them and the whole situation. Father Frain did so not only at the parish church, but also at the missions that he visited in his two-wheel gig. It wasn't long before malcontents among the parishioners were indignant to the point of bursting. Of course, there were the good, pious, parishioners who supported the pastor and felt that maybe now the parish would develop a new religious spirit.

However, it was not to be just yet. The revolters decided that the best way to make the pastor change his attitude was to make it impossible for him to get around the parish and at the same time show him that he was not welcome. Thereupon they stole his gig one night, took it to St. Amant and hid it in the woods. Another version has it that the gig was hoisted up in the trees. Father Frain condemned the attitude of the people vociferously, then went down to New Orleans and related to the Archbishop what had happened and what the conditions were in the parish. That was in mid-May, 1873, just two months after he had arrived. Monseigneur Perche again left the parish without a pastor.

It was only at the end of July that Monseigneur Perche appointed Rev. J. Juhel. The registers bear a notation: "Arrived at New River, 27th of July, 1873—Rev. J. Juhel." Archbishop Perche came up to New River later that year for Confirmation for a class of 151 persons, but at the same time, he stayed a few days, and evidently to lecture the obstreperous parishioners. While there he officiated at several baptisms. Father Juhel spent four and one-half years at pastor of New River. It is of interest to note that as late as 1873, the parish church was still under the name of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and is so entered in Archbishop Perche's record of Confirmations. It was possibly under his administration that the new church was erected, and the parish church became Sacred Heart of Jesus Church.

Around 1868, according to Joseph Gonzales, his father Captain Joseph Gonzales, Sheriff of Ascension, built a large home for himself on "la Riviere Neuve en bas," or St. Amant of today. Upstairs a room was fitted out as a chapel, and the pastors of New River offered Mass there occasionally on their visits for the people of that section. On September 27, 1874, Joseph Gonzales, Leon Dugas and the Widow E. B. Campbel, donated to Father Juhel, as agent for Archbishop Perche, a piece of land between eight and nine superficial arpents, fronting on New River on the left bank, about 14 miles from the Mississippi River. A chapel was built on this property shortly afterwards and it became known as St. Joseph's Chapel. This was the beginning of the church at St. Amant.

Father Juhel was transferred to Brusly, La., in January, 1878, and once more Father Ceuppens came over from Donaldsonville to minister to the people of New River and environs. In March, 1878, Rev. Marius Welte was sent to Sacred Heart Church at Cor-

Father Gaulrapp, pastor, signs a contract with Leonce Millet of Gonzales on May 10, 1952, to roll the old church building to one side so that work on the new church could start.

nerview, as the postoffice name was known for old settlement of New River, but trouble flared up anew with the parishioners and Father Welte left in October of that year, seven months after he had come. Around All Saints Day, 1878, Rev. Joseph Reynes came to New River but only for a brief time; he was Vicar General for financial affairs of the archdiocese. Again, Father Ceuppens came over to serve the parish. Then in February, 1879, Rev. J. Charles, who had served at Mermentau, was sent to assume the pastorate, but once more the difficulties of the parish discouraged continuation of pastoral service, and he left in March.

Father Mesnil Opens New Era

THE VACANCY at Sacred Heart Church of New River continued through 1879, the Archbishop being exasperated over the attitude and actions of the parishioners. It will be noted that Monseigneur Perche had repeatedly sought to provide a pastor acceptable to the people, but always the malcontents evoked difficulties for him and ended by driving him off. Loyal parishioners and devout Catholics in the congregation were dismayed, but their influence was overridden by the chronic revolters.

Monseigneur Perche tried again in May, 1880. This time he sent a very powerfully built priest, a Frenchman of great determination and doggedness, and a man of completely fearless char-

acter. He arrived near the end of May, 1880. His greeting to the parishioners was a blunt review of the situation with this admonition: He had heard of the priest-eating ability of some of the parishioners of Cornerview, so he wanted to warn them that if they wanted to try that, they would find out that he was maybe more than a mouthful!

This was the turn of the tide in the New River section. The good people of Sacred Heart parish gained the ascendancy, and before long, Father Mesnil had won the confidence and the esteem of the parishioners very generally, and the priest-baiters and parish dictators were soon discredited. Cooperation soon became the order of the day, in place of the lamentable spirit of dissension that had blighted the parish for so long. Father Mesnil served Sacred Heart Parish exactly eleven years, and did more for the parish than any pastor up to that time, but that took much courage, tact, determination and many sacrifices. His great friend and backer was Sheriff Gonzales, also his son.

Father Mesnil infused a new spirit in the congregation, and with his zeal and energetic efforts drew his flock into many activities, soon having all New River buzzing with projects. The Altar Society had been functioning "comme-ci comme-ca," but he revived it and made it active. By 1889 he had organized the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary with a membership of 300, the Society of the Sacred Heart for Men, 212 members; the Children of Mary, 43, and the Society for Christian Mothers, 17. He established also a parochial school, which was a combination of Catholic and public school, and it was staffed by lay teachers. This school, located near the Cornerview church, taught the fundamentals of education and religion, according to a statement by Alex J. Marchand and Alcide B. B. Gautreau. They recalled Miss Netta Braud as the principal teacher, but as enrollment mounted, she was assisted by Miss Marie Landry.

However, communities were so scattered and roads so bad, the enrollment did not pass the 100 mark. In each community there was a self-appointed person to teach prayers and catechism, the well-known "montreuses de catechisme," common throughout South Louisiana in parishes of Acadian folks. Some of these recalled by Mr. Marchand and Mr. Gautreau are Mrs. Theodule Gautreau, Mrs. Dominick Duplessis, Mrs. Tiburse Gaudin and many others. The 1892 parish report for the Archbishop showed 28 boys and 30 girls, taught by one lay teacher at Cornerview.

Father Mesnil made many improvements. He built a new presbytery which was sorely needed, but he furnished it out of his own pocket to avoid burdening the congregation. To defray expenses he introduced the conduct of parish festivals, which served to get the parishioners together and develop a better spirit of cooperation. Financing was difficult, because the area was strictly dependent upon crops, so whenever there were crop failures or floods money was scarce. Pew rents in 1888 totalled $690.25, and ordinary collections in the church on Sundays amounted to $118. Father Mesnil also improved the parish church, and this was made

possible by money gifts from his brother in France, and other members of his family.

The Catholic population of the parish in Father Mesnil's time was about 1300, but the number who received Holy Communion was dismally small. Here as was the case in so many South Louisiana Church parishes, Jansenism and other conditions kept many from the Sacraments. Father Mesnil strove doggedly to overcome this situation. When he first came he could report only 600 to 700 Communions per year, but when he left in 1892, the number had increased to 1200.

Baptisms ranged from 75 to 90 per year, but through his instructions and persistence, the number began to increase and by 1892, there were 105. This was true of Catholic marriages. In 1888, he recorded only nine, but in 1890 there were 27. When Archbishop Janssens visited Sacred Heart of New River in 1890, he Confirmed 210 people.

Father Mesnil also covered the whole extent of his vast parish, visiting regularly the Chapel of St. Joseph, "bas de la Riviere Neuve" (St. Amant); the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows at La Prairie, "for the burials made in the cemetery of La Prairie; that cemetery is not the property of the Church." He visited St. Amant, he told Archbishop Janssens, "once each month—if the roads are practical!" In 1889, he acted for the archdiocese in a grant and sale of land to the Church from Louis Parr and Simon Eliser, husband of Ella Babin, involving about five and one-half acres next to the cemetery. This was from the sucession of Delphine Landry.

In 1889, Father Mesnil was allowed a much-merited vacation for a visit to his family in France. While he was away from June through September, the parish was served by the Marist Fathers from Convent, La., including Rev. Thouvenin, S.M., Rev. J. M. Mandy, S.M., and Rev. J. Roman, S.M.

Father Mesnil continued his devoted labors at Cornerview through the end of December, 1892, when he was transferred. Parishioners saw him leave with sincere regrets, as he had done much for them, and had brought a new spirit to Sacred Heart parish. Spiritually and in its physical properties, the parish was in better condition than it had ever been in the 30 years of its existence.

Last Decades At Cornerview

IN JANUARY, 1893, Rev. Magloire Simon arrived to assume the pastorate of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church at Cornerview, but he remained only two years and two months. Archbishop Janssens came to New River and administered Confirmation to a class of 106. The number of Holy Communions which had gone down to 757 during the year 1893, including 73 in the First Communion class, went up to 1200 in 1894. The Catholic population was around 1800 people.

Finances of the parish continued very poor and uncertain, because of conditions of the crops and floods. Pew rent in 1893 brought $925.60, and the ordinary collections on Sundays for the entire year totalled $35.95. Funds declined even more during the ensuing year (1894), when the parish report shows $670.70 for

pew rent, and $30.80 received in the collections for 52 Sundays. The year 1893 saw most of the Riviere Neuve section under water from the Rescue Crevasse.

Father Simon was transferred in March, 1895, and Rev. A. Juille was sent that same month as the new pastor. The three years and nine months of Father Juille's pastorate were quite fruitful, and the zeal among parishioners, instilled by Father Mesnil was re-awakened. The new pastor made a determined effort to arouse the faithful to greater fidelity in the reception of the Sacraments, and in this he was quite successful. In 1896, he could report 2077 Holy Communions, and during the rest of his term in office the number remained over the 2000 mark.

Father Juille zealously promoted catechetical work. In this, the school at Cornerview was a big help, as he wrote to Archbishop Janssens: "My school which is public and private, counts today 85 children and increases day by day. It is a great help for catechism." In 1895, the enrollment stood at 37 boys and 34 girls. The lone teacher was paid $60 per year. Later another teacher had to be added. Miss Leontine Boudreaux was in charge, and she was assisted by her sister, Miss Alice. Later, A. A. Kling and Alphonse P. Marchand took over the task of teaching the school, which was still under the direction of the pastor. After Father Juille's time, this school was taken over as a public school and it was moved from the church grounds. However, catechism was taught by the teacher and by older pupils.

Father Juille had to hasten back to Chackbay, his former post, to settle affairs there, then upon his return to New River, he took up at the Archbishop's request the settlement of Church property. Difficulties arose during the administration of Father Simon, and the latter sought some arrangement in connection with the Homestead. Under Father Juille the question reached a climax and there was much excitement over a threat to the church land. An act of sale was finally arranged by Father Juille with J. M. Landry. Through the pastor's tact and quiet handling, satisfactory settlement was effected. This was necessary on account of the incorporation in 1894 of the parish under state act, and transfer of property to that corporation.

Father Juille also handled titles for the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows at La Prairie, but this entailed some difficulty. "The roads are so bad," he wrote to the Archbishop, "that it is difficult to have that man (notary) available for an act of sale." The roads interfered also with Father Juille's work: "Catechism is not far advanced. Sickness and bad roads prevent me from making the progress with the children as much as I would want."

The pastor revived the parish festivals, the one in 1895 netting $904, the one in 1896, $900. But in 1897, no fair could be held, because yellow fever broke out and the fair was cancelled. Despite the flood and ruined crops, Father Juille was able to improve finances notably. The total revenues in 1896 amounted to $2603.35, and although the pastor repaired the church and the rectory, expenses amounted to only $2242.88. He also repaired St. Joseph's Chapel "a la Riviere Neuve en bas" (St. Amant), and the one at

This is St. Theresa's Church at Gonzales after the steeple had been removed, because of its weakened condition.

Prairieville. He served each of these missions once a month. The church organ was repaired and new fences installed around the cemetery.

Father Juille organized the Confraternity of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and revivified the existing Rosary Confraternity, the Society of Christian Mothers and the Children of Mary. At the end of 1898, Father Juille was transferred to Larose, and Rev. Joseph Eugene Lavaquery was called from St. John the Baptist Church of Edgard to take charge of Sacred Heart Church of Cornerview, in January, 1899.

The new pastor plunged into parish work with his noted zeal. He brought the number of Holy Communions in 1899 to 2739, the highest in the annals of the parish to that time. He served St. Joseph's Chapel at St. Amant on the first and third Saturdays of each month, and Prairieville on the second and fourth Saturdays. Bishop Rouxel came in 1900 to Sacred Heart Church and gave Confirmation to 404—the largest class to that time.

In December, 1900, devoted Father Lavaquery became ill and died at Cornerview. He was buried in the parish cemetery, after solemn ceremonies, attended by members of the clergy and Bishop Rouxel.

Rev. Wenceslas Geens was called to the pastorate of Cornerview's Sacred Heart Church in December, 1900, and he continued in that post until April, 1905. He was the first non-French pastor assigned to the parish, but he spoke French fluently—a necessary requirement in a parish where French was universally spoken.

Finances were very uncertain, what with crop failures and low farm prices, so parish revenues declined to $1538.90 in 1900 and even lower in 1902, but 1904 saw an increase to $2218.15. The 75 cent Christmas collection of 1897, grew to $3.90 in 1900.

Father Geens began visiting St. Amant every Saturday, where he offered Mass, gave a sermon and conducted catechism class for children. The Catholic parish population was set at 2500 in 1901, and he showed it as high as 2800 in 1904.

Once again the old spirit began to flare up in the parish during Father Geens' administration. A mass meeting was called for the parishioners in November, 1904, "for the purpose of seeing our priest, Father Geens, to discuss with him the affairs of the church, to see if some plan cannot be arrived at by which our church cannot receive some of the very much needed repairs to same." A committee of five men was formed to "visit with Father Geens for the purpose of carrying out the above demands."

However, Father Geens felt that revenues were insufficient and above all, very uncertain, so he deferred the proposal for remodeling. Conditions were disagreeable in the parish after this, and the following April, 1905, Father Geens was transferred.

Archbishop Chapelle then sent Rev. J. C. Gonon, a French priest, to take charge of the parish. On April 8, 1905, he took over the post from his predecessor. He estimated the parish population at 2150. It was five years since Confirmation had been given in the parish, so Father Gonon arranged with Bishop Rouxel for his visit, prepared a class, and on December 19, the Auxiliary Bishop gave Confirmation to 314 persons. Archbishop Blenk came on July 8, 1908, and, as the result of Father Gonon's zealous and assiduous work, 445 persons were Confirmed. On the following day, 136 were Confirmed at St. Amant. The Archbishop returned on April 16, 1912, and administered Confirmation to 450.

Father Gonon was a zealous and devoted priest, who gave himself wholeheartedly to his flock of the Cornerview parish. He was a man of understanding and prudence, and he won the cooperation and respect of the people as never before. The spiritual efforts of Father Gonon are reflected in the progress made in a deeper spirit of religion that developed, greater piety and a quadrupling of the number of people approaching the Sacraments. The parochial societies had declined almost to extinction, but he revived and activated them, particularly the Children of Mary and the Ladies Altar Society, also the Sacred Heart Society for men. The 2350 Holy Communions of 1905 grew to 9755 in 1917. In 1908, there were 205 Baptisms.

An inventory of the church property at Cornerview was made in 1908 by Father Gonon at the direction of Archbishop Blenk. The reason was obvious. In 1906, he wrote to Archbishop Blenk: "In the near future, a new church will have to be built, which will be more centrally located, Cornerview being at one end of the parish, and St. Amant at the other extremity. Gonzales most like-

ly will be the natural site for the church—five miles from St. Amant and four miles from Cornerview."

In 1905, St. Joseph's Chapel and the territory it served, had been cut off from Sacred Heart Parish and made into an independent parish with a resident priest, but this arrangement was short-lived, and once more St. Amant was attached to Cornerview as a mission. The Archbishop concurred in the proposal about Gonzales as the parish center, and directed Father Gonon to act accordingly. Nevertheless, crop failures, lack of funds and other circumstances intervened and the transfer ordered in 1908, was deferred.

When Father Gonon came to Cornerview, he stated that he found the rectory "in a dilapidated condition," so he immediately made necessary repairs. The parish church at Cornerview also needed repairs, so as soon as the expenses for the rectory repairs were paid, Father Gonon accumulated some funds and in 1907, he spent $2150 to repair Sacred Heart Church, and enlarge it. In 1908, he wrote: "The church has been almost rebuilt and frescoed. Part of the expense was paid by the fair. Should I die, there is no debt." Generously, Father Gonon had arranged to pay out of his own funds. In 1915, he installed statues of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Aloysius in the church.

The 1908 inventory discloses the church as owning about 20 acres more or less in cultivation; a frame and shingle-roof church covered with weatherboards, and inside with a ceiling, the whole finished in Renaissance and frescoed; three altars, five statues, a St. Anthony's Chapel; 144 pews, 30 columns, 19 windows; Baptismal font; two confessionals; one organ, one bell in the steeple; one meeting hall; one barn with stables; one rectory; cemetery, "about 200 feet from the church, not so well kept, there being few funerals there on account of more funerals at Prairieville, an older and larger graveyard, which does not belong to the church; Prairieville Cemetery is six miles from Cornerview."

In 1908, A. M. Marchand, Sr., A. Mayer and O. Mayer of Acy P.O., petitioned Bishop Blenk for re-establishment of the parish at St. Amant, and pledged ability to support a resident priest. They stated that Father Gonon told them that if they would pledge $1000 per year, an assistant could be obtained and St. Amant would have Mass for three Sundays of the month, but the people of the vicinity felt that this amount would support a resident pastor so they requested establishment of the parish. Nothing was done at the time, and it was only a decade later that the St. Amant parish was revived.

Father Gonon continued to visit St. Amant and Prairieville, and in 1912, he began to serve the stations of Lake, McElroy and Sorrento. A new chapel in 1913 was built at Prairieville. He directed the people of Lake Villard near the Amite in building their own chapel. Some contributed beams and joists, others weatherboards, ceiling and flooring; others again hauled the material, while some unable to give anything else, donated their labor. The Chapel of Our Lady of the Lake was blessed by Archbishop Blenk on October 26, 1914, and Father Gonon offered the first Mass in it.

Conditions that existed in the parish are noted by Father Gonon in his reports, from which we quote, this one in 1909: "Our community has been suffering a great deal from the boll weevil and high water the last three years, in fact, hardly one-third of a crop has been made. However, the good people of New River although very poor, are always ready to contribute, even above their means for the support of the church. The immense crowd attending Mass on Sunday is enough to edify anyone. Men especially, show the good example. . . For many reasons, it is impossible to move our church to Gonzales for the time being; consequently, we intend to rebuild the steeple of our church this year. The old one was blown down." This happened during the hurricane of 1909, when some windows of the church were also smashed. Father Gonon expected prosperity to return—a drainage district was being organized and a sawmill was "to be built soon two miles below St. Amant."

However, in 1911, he wrote: "The cotton crop has been a failure in New River for the last four or five years, but now the material prospects are very encouraging, farmers going into cane. I will try to buy a location in Gonzales for the future erection of a church and school there. As soon as the farmers are themselves again, it will be advisable to recommend the appointment of a pastor at St. Amant." In 1912, the picture was again dismal: "This parish has been ruined by the boll weevil and high water. Many families are moving out to other places."

A mission was held at Cornerview's Sacred Heart Church in 1913, and Holy Communions soared to 5460. Revenues were declining and for that year, there was only $1723.19 received, but expenses went up to $2032.38, due especially to needed repairs to the church roof. To balance the revenues and the expenses, Father Gonon noted in his report: "I have reduced my salary." In 1914, Father Gonon was visiting Prairieville, St. Amant and Lake each twice a month and Sorrento and McElroy once a month, but the work was telling on his health.

Conditions began to improve, and the population started to increase. The parish census of 1916 disclosed 4046 Catholics in the parochial territory, including the missions. Groups of lay people had started raising funds for erection of churches at Gonzales, Prairieville and St. Amant, and in 1917, Father Gonon reported that $4150 was in the hands of committees.

The Chapel Car of the Catholic Church Extension Society visited in the area during 1917, and much good was accomplished. Some 22 marriages were performed in the car, and many came back to the Sacraments.

When the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company built its line to Baton Rouge from New Orleans, it chose an inland and direct route, running through Gonzales and Prairieville, thus giving Gonzales a greater importance than ever. The river road bypassed Cornerview, and the new airline highway also by-passed it, but cut through Gonzales. Father Gonon in 1917, in his annual report, called attention to the growing importance of Gonzales, and recalled the order of Archbishop Blenk, about moving the parish

church there, but added: "The country having suffered great hardship and financial calamity for seven or eight years, the project was abandoned."

Finally, in April, 1918, Father Gonon, at his request, was transferred to Paincourtville. This brought about carrying out of episcopal orders for the transfer of the parish center. Father Gonon's pastorate of 13 years was the longest up to his time.

Gonzales Becomes Parish Center

THE NEW PASTOR was Rev. Eugene Hubert, who formally took over the parish on April 11, 1918, in the presence of Very Rev. Arthur Drossaerts, Dean of the Baton Rouge Deanery. The parish limits were defined as: "All of the civil Parish of Ascension on the east side of the river, except the river front plantations which belong to Smoke Bend and St. Gabriel. The Prairieville church is now building . . . . debts for this rest with the building committee."

Before leaving, Father Gonon had purchased land at Gonzales for a future church—on February 11, 1918, six acres below the LR&N tracks and facing the Burnside Road, from Mrs. Judith Gautreaux, wife of Ulysse Gautreaux, for $300; and six acres from Amelia Eliser Gautreau, widow of Gille Gautreau for $50, also in the same vicinity.

Father Hubert readily saw the need of transferring the parish center to Gonzales. In 1918, Archbishop Shaw visited the New River section and authorized the new pastor to move to Gonzales. Gaudens Pousson was retained to erect the new parochial church in that community on the land that Father Gonon had bought. He used the same plan as the one used for the church at Iota, La., as suggested by the late Rt. Rev. Msgr. F. L. Gassler, who later became dean of Baton Rouge Deanery, to Father Gonon before the latter left.

A survey of the area for pledges was made, and the Catholic Church Extension Society was asked for funds to aid the new church. Pledges from 198 families totalled $1503.50. In 1918, Father Hubert had collected, cash in hand, $2750. A huge parish fair was planned for the fall, in expectation of raising $1000. Extension donated $500.

The new church was 116 feet long by 60 feet wide, and its steeple 106 feet high. The cost of the structure, Father Hubert stated, was less than $10,000 and of this in 1919, there remained only $800 to be paid. A note in the parish registers states: "The title of Our Lady of Peace was intended for the church at Gonzales, before its blessing, but it was never sanctioned. A benefactor from the Extension Society having contributed $500 towards the erection of the church, asked for the favor that it should be dedicated to St. Theresa of Avila."

Archbishop Shaw then authorized Father Hubert to build a rectory at Gonzales in 1918, and he moved to that residence adjoining the church. On May 3, 1920, Archbishop Shaw came to Gonzales and formally dedicated the new St. Theresa of Avila Church, after which he blessed the new rectory also.

This photograpph shows the first St. Theresa's Church at Gonzales as it appeared shortly after its erection in 1918 by Father Hubert. The church was designed and built by Gaudens Pousson of Iota, La., who followed a style and plan common in South Louisiana for many decades.

The change in the parish center caused no little dissatisfaction in Cornerview, especially when a rumor was circulated that the old Sacred Heart Church was to be dismantled and moved to Gonzales to be used there as it might be needed. A bitter protest was drafted and dispatched to Archbishop Shaw by residents of the Cornerview area. Among the 97 signers were three widows: Mrs. A. LeBlanc, Mrs. E. Poche, and Mrs. A. Babin.

The Archbishop thereupon decided, since the parishioners said they wanted to retain their church on account of the adjoining cemetery, which they had used as they stated for 60 years, that the old church be used as a mortuary chapel. This suggestion caused still greater dissatisfaction, and a second protest declared that the Cornerview residents wanted a "live chapel" and not a mortuary chapel. They asked that since Prairieville was to be made a parish, that the priest from that church be designated to serve Sacred Heart. However, Cornerview was made a mission of Gonzales, and Father Hubert served it twice each month, and later three times.

On September 1, 1919, Archbishop Shaw erected Prairieville into an independent parish, and St. Amant was also carved out of the old New River parish thus leaving Gonzales with a greatly restricted territory.

Disagreement developed over Father Hubert in 1926, and protests were sent to Archbishop Shaw by parishioners. In April, 1933, Father Hubert resigned and left for Europe. He had served as pastor for 15 years and one month.

Rev. Victor Baron was chosen by Archbishop Shaw as the next pastor, and Monsignor Gassler witnessed the transfer of the parish by Father Hubert to Father Baron. However, a revolt of parishioners against the authority of the Archbishop induced Father Baron to resign.

Archbishop Shaw then appointed Rev. William J. Castel as pastor of St. Theresa's Parish of Gonzales in May of 1933. He re-awakened the parish spirit and won the esteem and co-operation of the people, but particularly successful were his efforts to overcome spiritual lethargy and negligence in regard to reception of the Sacraments. Another of his notable contributions was the inauguration of summer religious school for the children of the parish. Father Castel's pastorate marked the turn of the tide in regard to the spiritual life of the Gonzales parish.

One of the pastor's first projects was the erection of a substantial and worthy residence for the parish priest. This was undertaken a few months after his arrival in 1933. Owen Southwell was the architect. Glass was replaced in the church, the electric wiring was renewed and other repairs were made.

Father Castel realized with dismay the lack of sufficient instruction for the children since there was no parochial school. He thereupon promptly organized a summer vacation religious school. The Sisters of St. Joseph from Baton Rouge came to Gonzales to handle the classes. On the first day, 318 children attended, but in a day or two, the number had passed the 400 mark. Parishioners welcomed the opportunity to provide religious instruction for their children. Two seminarians helped out with the boys' classes, and seven lay school teachers also helped the Sisters. That summer, 280 children made their private Communion, and many parents approached the Holy Table with them, so that there were some 700 persons who received Holy Communion.

The summer school was so successful and there was so much demand among parents for its continuation, that Father Castel made it a regular annual feature during his pastorate. So many children from distant parts of the parish desired to attend, that busses were employed to transport them. Parishioners co-operated with the pastor as never before.

Later the religious vacation school was taken over by the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Eucharist, who also came each year during the summer, except since construction of the new church was started.

In addition, Father Castel revived parochial societies and established others. The 1934 report shows the Apostleship of Prayer with 230 members; Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 60; Holy Name Society (Seniors), 40, and Juniors, 33. There was also an active Altar Society. After 1936, under the directives of Archbishop Rummel for the whole archdiocese, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the CYO (for boys and for girls) and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith were all established in the

parish. The Confraternity did excellent work in handling catechetical work and getting children to instructions.

The persistent, zealous spiritual work by the pastor showed its results in deeper Catholic spirit and greater piety. The year 1935 saw 16,216 persons at the Holy Table during the year, and the following year (1936) the report showed 26,100 receiving Holy Communion. As late as 1929, the number of Communions had stood at only 4000. The 1936 census showed a Catholic parochial population of 1582. Since then, however, the parish population has steadily increased and Father Gaulrapp's report for 1951 listed the census as 2498 individuals.

Father Castel also sought to help the farm families in a material way, aiding them in organizing to market their crops and garner their revenues for the lean years, through establishment of a credit union. The facilities and guidance of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference were also made available, thus bringing into the archdiocese for the first time this splendid national Catholic group. Father Castel was named by the Archbishop as its first archdiocesan director.

The parish had made great strides spiritually, Catholic instruction for children was developed to a high peak of effectiveness, Catholic organizations throve to the highest degree so far, and above all, the old spiritual lethargy seemed to have been banished and greater fidelity in the reception of the Sacraments became manifest. Father Castel's administration of five years and eight months was in truth a fruitful and efficient one.

In February, 1939, Archbishop Rummel called the Gonzales pastor to New Orleans to assume the pastorate of St. Rita's Church, a post which he still holds. It was with real joy that St. Theresa's parishioners in Gonzales learned a few years later of his elevation to the rank of Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor, and to this day, Monsignor Castel is remembered with reverence and esteem.

In This Our Day

ON JANUARY 25, 1939, His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, notified Rev. Edmund Gaulrapp of his appointment as pastor of St. Theresa of Avila Church at Gonzales, La. He took over the direction of the parish formally on February 15, 1939, the 15th regularly appointed pastor of the New River area, and the third pastor since establishment of the parish church at Gonzales.

The labors and achievements of Father Gaulrapp, his devotion and ceaseless efforts on behalf of his flock, are all matters of personal experience and knowledge to his people. The beautiful, permanent, substantial and spacious new parish church is a monument to the labors and vision of the pastor, and the co-operation and piety of the parishioners who have worked together to bring to reality a dream of many years. Hence, little need be added here about pastor and flock of today.

Under the capable leadership of Father Gaulrapp, the parish has forged ahead both spiritually and physically. The year that the new pastor took over, he reported 17,500 Holy Communions, and since that time, it has been his consolation to see that number

grow steadily or at least maintained in a total Catholic parochial population of 2498. Average Mass attendance stands at 1200 or more. Communions reached an all-time high of 22,000 in 1944.

The year 1952 report listed 87 Baptisms, 21 marriages and 12 funerals. The last summer vacation school in 1951 saw 380 children attending, but because of construction work, this activity had to be dispensed with until the new church was completed. However, consistently sustained instruction is given throughout the year to more than 370 children.

Parish organizations have been regularly promoted. In 1940 the Holy Name Seniors, counted 35 members; the Sodality of Our Lady, 37; the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 66; the Altar Society, 88, and the Propagation of the Faith, 46.

The parish had continued to operate under the charter of Sacred Heart Church of Cornerview, obtained in 1894, by Archbishop Janssens, but, as was proper, Archbishop Rummel and Father Gaulrapp, with the trustees of the parish, arranged for the incorporation of the parish under its new parish center at Gonzales. Accordingly, on November 24, 1939, through an act before

Rev. Edmund Gaulrapp, present pastor, after the completion of the foundations for the new church, lays the first brick.

Charles I. Denechaud, a charter was obtained under the name: "Congregation of St. Theresa Roman Catholic Church, Gonzales, La." It was signed, besides by the Archbishop, the late Monsignor Racine (Vicar-General) and Father Gaulrapp, by two laymen of the parish, Alphonse Pierre Marchand, and Thomas Benton Landry, the first lay trustees and members of the board.

When the United States was drawn into World War II, parishioners of St. Theresa's loyally answered the call to the colors, as they had done in the War Between the States, in the Spanish-American War, and in World War I. There were many stars in the parish service flag, and there were gold stars, too. Father Gaulrapp showed his patriotism and his solicitude for the boys in service by many deeds, which are remembered gratefully by fathers and mothers and by those who came back. Every man was written to by his pastor, and prayers without ceasing went up to heaven for their welfare and safe return. And those who did not come back, were remembered, too, at the altar. Father Gaulrapp also served as Auxiliary Military Chaplain during the war.

Parish finances had been tremendously improved by Father Castel, and during the administration of Father Gaulrapp this improvement has been marked even more. The total parish revenues of $19,979.17 in 1947, was a far cry from the total receipts of $961 that Father Mesnil counted in 1888. The substantial contributions of St. Theresa's parishioners in this our day are a reflection of their splendid parochial spirit and their generosity towards their Church and their pastor. Added to this are the substantial amounts contributed for the erection of the impressive new church, further evidence of the inspiring new spirit that has developed in the "Riviere Neuve" section.

One of the features of Father Gaulrapp's administration has been the publication of a weekly parochial bulletin, which he started in January, 1940, and which regularly offered much valuable instruction and many points in religion, besides regular parochial announcements or appeals. The bulletin was made possible through the generous donation of a mimeograph machine by the efficient Ushers' Society of St. Theresa's Church.

As the population of the parish grew and duties of the pastor multiplied, and since additional Masses were added on Sundays and holy days, it was necessary to obtain the help of religious priests. But in 1949, His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, gave Father Gaulrapp and the parish a regular assistant—Rev. John A. Tomasovich. He served through 1951, and the following years was succeeded by Rev. Hubert Broussard. On June 20, 1953, Rev. Donald Songy, ordained shortly before that, was designated as assistant pastor at Gonzales.

The past decade and one-half has seen a great change in the parish and the flowering of a new spirit. By the grace of God and the zeal and leadership of the pastor this has been brought about. St. Theresa's Parish has come into its own in this our day.

The story of the erection of the new church for the parish, its financing through the generosity of its people, and the leadership provided by the pastor in this great task have already been

Top left, scene at ground-breaking ceremonies for the new church; top right, soil borings at new church site; lower left, His Excellency, Bishop Caillouet, blesses the cornerstone; lower right, the new bell at time of its consecration.

given at the beginning of this booklet. All of this has come about during the administration of His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, who celebrated this year, the silver jubilee as a Bishop, and last year, the golden jubilee of his priesthood. Come this November, and the New River Parish will have reached its 90th year. The present pastor is now in the 15th year of his administration of the venerable parish.

In tribute to all of these and to the memory of the pioneer Catholics who provided the means for the establishment and continuation of this parish, and the devoted priests who made so many sacrifices for its perpetuation this record has been set down and is dedicated. May it prove an inspiration and a guide for still further glories and manifestations of a true, loyal, sound Catholic spirit.

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